

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 9003

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OVIP (KREISKY, BRUNO) AU

SUBJECT: KREISKY VISIT TO US: BACKGROUND PAPER: SOVIET JEWISH
EMIGRE TRANSIT FACILITY

FOR EUR/CE- BRUCE FLATIN

REF: VIENNA 8873

1. THE AUSTRIAN RED CROSS OWNS AND OPERATES A TRANSIT FACILITY,
LOCATED ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF VIENNA NEAR THE VIENNA AIRPORT,
FOR SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRES PASSING THROUGH AUSTRIA ENROUTE
TO ISRAEL. THE FACILITY OPENED THIS SPRING AND IS THE
PERMANENT REPLACEMENT OF THE FORMER FACILITY, LOCATED AT
SCHONAU CASTLE, WHICH WAS VACATED IN DECEMBER 1973 FOLLOWING
AN ARAB TERRORIST INCIDENT IN VIENNA EARLIER THAT FALL. IN
THE INTERIM, A TEMPORARY FACILITY, LOCATED IN AN AUSTRIAN
ARMY KASERNE NEAR VIENNA, WAS IN USE.

2. THE CURRENT FACILITY, WHICH CAN HANDLE ABOUT 400 PERSONS,
PROVIDES OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS AND PRELIMINARY PROCESSING.
ITS LOCATION NEAR THE VIENNA AIRPORT PERMITS RAPID,
EFFECTIVE HANDLING OF THE EMIGRES AND THEIR SECURE
MOVEMENT TO WAITING FLIGHTS.

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3. THERE WAS SOME INITIAL ADVERSE REACTION TO THE LOCATION OF THE TRANSIT FACILITY IN ITS PRESENT LOCATION BY RESIDENTS LIVING IN THE AREA AND THE MAYOR, REACTING TO THE LOCAL PUBLIC OUTCRY, REQUESTED THE FACILITY'S REMOVAL TO ANOTHER LOCATION. THE AUSTRIAN RED CROSS AND THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR ISRAEL BELIEVE THAT ONCE THE FUROR SUBSIDES, THE FACILITY WILL BE ABLE TO REMAIN AT ITS PRESENT LOCATION.

4. OF THE 35,000 SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRES WHO LEFT THE SOVIET UNION IN 1973, ABOUT 33,000 PASSED THROUGH THE SCHONAU FACILITY. AUSTRIA, AS IS EVIDENT, HAS BORNE THE MAIN POLITICAL BURDEN OF TRANSITING SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRES. WHILE STRESSING THEIR CONTINUED DETERMINATION TO MAINTAIN THE EXISTING TRANSIT FACILITY, AUSTRIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE APPROACHED A NUMBER OF GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING THE U.S., ON MORE EQUITABLE SHARING OF THE FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL BURDENS. IN ANTICIPATION OF A POSSIBLE INCREASE IN THE SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRE FLOW AS A RESULT OF THE US-USSR UNDERSTANDING ON THE MATTER, THE AUSTRIANS WOULD LIKE TO INVOLVE MORE COUNTRIES AS TRANSIT POINTS. HUMB

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